

FLEX FLEX Your Ideas

FYI

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Don't Be Imprisoned by the Conditions Around You

By Ashley Cowles

Nick Cianci, a young professional from Greenville, PA, spoke at TEDxErie last year about his vision for regional development. Cianci attended Mercyhurst University and then took a job at his high school alma mater where a coach he had as a student said to him, "That's an interesting idea—a young person comes back to the area to work."

If you're a young professional who has returned to the area, you may have heard comments like this. Cianci also often heard something along the lines of, "You're so talented and you have so much potential, go somewhere where it can be put to good use. I would hate to see you waste it here." He also mentions that often times when he would tell people he chose to live at home, people acted like he was nuts.

It is so unfortunate that people have this mindset, especially when you're a young professional excited to come back and make an impact on your hometown. Cianci compared this to a concept many may be unfamiliar with—Lake Erie surfing. When the seasons change and the weather gets cold, people all along the Great Lakes, including Lake Erie, take advantage of the waves produced by high winds and actually surf. The waters are freezing and conditions are dangerous, but these surfers tough it out. "They stop at their geography and their rationality," Cianci said. "They essentially create their own waves."

Cianci then tells the story of his grandfather—an immigrant from Italy who settled in Greenville, known as a "rust belt town." He imagined America as a place for opportunity, but arrived during the hard times of the Great Depression. Cianci's grandfather worked hard and opened multiple businesses—a barber shop, convenience store, restaurant, and motel. "Much like the Great Lakes surfers, he refused to be imprisoned by the conditions around him," Cianci said.

Many young people in Cianci's hometown, much like our own hometown, look at the conditions and, rather than find opportunities and work to make a difference, they leave. Cianci encourages people to look at their area, no matter how impossible the conditions may seem, and be the type of people who may have their backs against the wall, resources limited, and doubters all around them, but open their heart and mind and create.

So, Venango County young professionals, why allow yourself to be imprisoned by the conditions around you? Instead, we encourage you to create your own waves!

You can hear Cianci's full TED Talk at FLEX Presents on April 1, 2016, 6:30 p.m. (see page 4).



2 Brian Hoffman



Brian Hoffman, a design engineer of Haulage Systems at Joy Global, is a young professional who was born and raised in Venango County and continues to work in the area!

Brian grew up in Nectarine, a small village in southwestern Venango County, where he attended Franklin Area High School and then pursued his bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Grove City College. After graduating college, he worked at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management in Boyers, PA, and then returned to Franklin in 2006 where he started working at Joy Global.

Brian is proud of many aspects of his life, including the person he has become, the area he is from, his career accomplishments, and his bicycle collection. In his free time, he enjoys cycling, listening to music, eating good food, spending time with friends and family, and traveling, especially to Breckenridge, Colorado.

If entertaining a visitor in Venango County, Brian would introduce them to delicious food at Amazing Foods Catering & Café and then enjoy some outdoors at the Kennerdell Tract bordering State Game Land No. 39.

In the future, Brian hopes to be able to look back at his life and be happy with it. His professional life is important to him, but he does not want to lose focus on his personal life, either. Brian is proud to call Venango County his home and we're happy to have yet another great young professional in our area!

Photos from FLEX Social Fridays



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We love when young professionals move to our area—one of those being Cara Stockdale! Cara is the new Executive Director of the Venango County Historical Society and is excited to share her passion for history with our area.

Cara grew up in Dayton, Pennsylvania, located in Armstrong County. She attended Indiana University where she received her bachelor’s degree in history and while in college, she volunteered at the Jefferson County History Center in Brookville. After graduating in 2013, Cara attended Clarion University where she received her master’s degree in journalism and public relations and fulfilled her internship at the Jefferson County History Center.

Cara graduated in 2015 and was hired full-time by the Jefferson County History Center as Outreach Coordinator. Overall, Cara spent four years with the history center where she learned collections management, heritage tourism, public relations, marketing, event planning, board relations, grant writing, volunteer coordination, exhibition development from concept to implementation, archival techniques, research techniques and more!

Cara became executive director of the Venango County Historical Society this past **December** and we are very excited to have her working in our area! She hopes to bring more awareness to the history of Venango County by showcasing the rich history of the area and bringing it to the public in exciting new ways.

Cara also plans to begin writing new publications which explain some of her favorite characters and their lives, and she has a major goal to become a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg, in which she’s been studying the battle most of her life and is ready to take on the challenge.

Since she was little, Cara’s greatest passion has been military history, so in her free time she reads a lot on the subject, especially works related to the American Civil War and World War II. She has also been collecting Civil War and WWII militaria for quite some time, but her collection of Civil War era photography is her pride and joy, along with an original 1943 Norman Rockwell version of Rosie the Riveter. She also has two Labrador retrievers, Brook and Samson, who she says are like her children, and she spends a lot of time walking the trails in the area with them.

Being fairly new to the area, Cara enjoys meeting people who are passionate about Venango County's history and culture. Making those connections is truly inspiring to her and we hope to help her make even more as a young professional in our area!

YP’s Enjoy FLEX Social Fridays

In January, FLEX gathered at Dawndi’s Restaurant in Franklin for the first FLEX Social Friday of the year. About 18 young professionals were there to network, eat great food, and talk about the many great events and projects planned for the year.

In February, FLEX met at Wanango Golf Club, where the hospitality was at an all-time high. Members enjoyed Chef’s flatbread creations, which included the group’s favorites Sicilian style pizza and breaded buffalo chicken flatbreads. The group was given a personal tour of the facility and shown many hidden unique spaces.

Interested in hosting a FLEX Social Friday at your business location? Let us know at FLEX@venangochamber.org.

Event News

Bike 'n Brew Planning Meeting Set for March 18

The countdown to the First Annual Oil Heritage Festival Bike 'n Brew event, set for Friday, July 22, is underway and less than 5 months away. FLEX members have been busy searching for the right downtown Oil City location to host the brew portion of the event and putting a variety of behind the scenes tasks to rest. A location will be confirmed this month and the group will kick into high gear to finalize biking routes, tasting glasses, sampling cards and more. Now is the time to get involved in this high energy planning crew. They plan to meet at Liberty Street Ale House in Franklin at 6 p.m. on March 18. Anyone interested is welcome.

FLEX Confirms TEDx Speaker for Annual "Presents" Event



FLEX Presents celebrates the achievements of Venango County's young professionals, those under 40 who contribute to their community through civic engagement, leadership development, and networking.

The event will be held on April 1, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at the Quality Inn in Franklin and will feature networking, hors d'oeuvres, beverages, and Nick Cianci's 11-minute, thought provoking, TEDx talk, discussed in this edition.

Nick is a native of Greenville, PA and the Director of Enrollment for the Kennedy Catholic Family of Schools, a Pre K -12 system in Hermitage, PA. He earned dual B.A. degrees from Mercyhurst University and is pursuing a Master's of Educational Leadership from Edinboro University. His professional interests include regional development, entrepreneurship, community partnerships, and youth development.

"I am a firm believer our region's return to greatness will only occur with the action and investment of young professionals with vision. I am excited to share a message of grit and opportunity with Venango County, an area built upon innovation and hard work" says Cianci.

The cost to attend is \$15 and you can reserve your ticket online at VenangoChamber.org. Nomination are still being accepted through March 15th for Young Professionals of the Year. To help you nominate a YP, we've made the process easier. Visit the Chamber's website to use the new online and printable forms.



OUR MISSION

FLEX represents the needs and interests of Young Professionals by positioning ourselves as leaders, entrepreneurs and advocates for the sustainability of the Venango Area through civic engagement, leadership development, and networking.

Where you'll find FLEX:

Tuesday, March 8, 7:45 a.m. - Oil City High School Career Exploration Fair
Friday, March 18, 6 p.m. - Bike 'n Brew Planning Meeting at Liberty St. Ale House
Friday, April 1, 6:30 p.m. - FLEX Presents **reserve your ticket now*

Chamber events: Check out the Chamber's Calendar of Events at www.venangochamber.org

email: flex@venangochamber.org



VenangoFLEX